

Project Narrative

A. Cover Page

1. Project title: **RCAC/EPA Region 9 Water Infrastructure Environmental Finance Center**
2. Name of applicant: Rural Community Assistance Corporation (RCAC)
3. EFC Category: 2) Regional Water Infrastructure Environment Finance Center (RWI EFC) with Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding
4. EPA Region: Region 9 (R9)
5. Has the applicant received an EFC grant in the past from EPA?: Yes
6. Key personnel and contact information:
Ari Neumann, Director, Community & Environmental Services
Email: aneumann@rcac.org Telephone: (916) 588-0112
7. Total project cost: \$3,750,000.00
8. Project period: October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2027

B. Executive Summary

To help a significant number of small, rural, disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged Colonia-designated, Tribal, Hawaiian and Pacific Island communities within EPA Region 9 build their capacity to ensure compliance with environmental regulations and effectively utilize federal investment from the BIL fund, RCAC will operate a collaborative, responsive, and innovative RWI EFC. The proposed RWI EFC, located in West Sacramento, CA, will provide proven on-the-ground experience and knowledge garnered over RCAC's 44-year existence. RCAC has identified Moonshot Missions (MM) and the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP) as appropriate and necessary partners to successfully conduct the project.

The following table summarizes the proposed project's Outputs and corresponding anticipated Outcomes:

Proposed Outputs	Anticipated Outcomes
1. Research and Outreach Strategy	1. Ensure inclusivity of small, underserved, rural, disadvantaged, tribal, colonias, Hawaiian and Pacific Island communities and tribal water / wastewater utilities for participation in the BIL infrastructure funding opportunity.
2. Training	2. Increase actionable knowledge of water and wastewater utility officials and staff on how to access BIL infrastructure financing and funding for water projects.
3. Pre-Development Technical Assistance	3. Increase the number of SRF applications from small, underserved, rural, disadvantaged communities, and tribal water / wastewater utilities.
4. Post-Award Capacity Building Technical Assistance	4. Applicants will be compliant with federal procurement and project monitoring requirements. 5. Applicants will achieve long-term technical, managerial, and financial sustainability.

C. Workplan

i. Project Description:

The RWI EFC will provide regulated utilities throughout the entire EPA R9 (Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, the Pacific Islands, 148 Tribal nations and over 150 Colonia communities) with culturally competent training and technical assistance in all areas of environmental finance, including ways to finance their environmental protection and public health responsibilities while ensuring environmental justice. This work will be accomplished by educational events, creation and dissemination of finance-related tools and resources, research, and on- and off-site direct technical assistance and training. Training delivery will be through face-to-face workshops in classroom-like settings, and webinars and web-based learning modules.

Initially, the R9 RWI EFC will focus on identifying communities most in need of infrastructure improvement projects. RCAC will provide TA to community utilities with no or limited capacity to successfully apply for and access BIL funding for capital improvement projects. RCAC will develop and implement an outreach program targeted to rural communities, including farmworkers, Hawaiian and Pacific Islands communities, Tribal and Colonia communities, particularly those that have not previously received federal funding. Our focus on serving these disadvantaged communities will be to advance equity for those that have struggled to secure public funding and/or receive the help they need to access resources to support infrastructure improvements that protect public health, safeguard the environment, and mitigate environmental justice concerns.

To assist in prioritizing initial outreach and technical assistance to areas that are most likely to have been excluded or to experience inequalities when accessing federal funds, the R9 RWI EFC will create a Disadvantaged Community Identification (DCI) tool – a GIS map with multiple layers of social, economic and environmental indicators. Layers may include, but are not limited to:

- Income and poverty demographics
- Federally recognized Tribes
- Community Viability indexes
- Pollution burden
- Natural disaster vulnerability
- State defined Disadvantaged Communities (DAC) status
- State Drinking Water SRF affordability criteria/ census block
- Clean Water SRF affordability criteria/census block
- Environmental Justice indicators
- Previous federal funding for capital projects
- Persistent Poverty counties/regions

RCAC will identify opportunities and develop events in coordination with local and state agencies to market the availability of the BIL funding. The R9 RWI EFC will work with funding and regulatory agencies to develop a systematic outreach program to target communities and

systems to increase their awareness of BIL funding opportunities and how to access them. Targeted communities will be contacted via phone, email and in person, whenever possible, throughout the agreement period. RCAC staff will rely on existing, and build new, relationships designed to create trust and encourage communities to pursue funding to address their infrastructure project needs. This targeted approach will elevate the visibility of the SRF programs for communities that usually do not use this funding source and increase the number of small and rural communities funded by SRF programs.

As the R9 RWI EFC, RCAC will work with interested communities to evaluate their Technical, Managerial, and Financial (TMF) capacity, identify and assess their capital infrastructure project needs and overall project development and project management readiness, including procurement policies and other tools needed to advance the development of infrastructure projects. TMF assessments will inform individual community workplans and guide further capacity building TA/Training efforts to assist communities to successfully apply for, secure and utilize the BIL funds for needed capital improvements.

Upon award of the funding, RCAC will undertake the following tasks:

- Develop marketing materials to inform decision makers about funding opportunities
- In coordination with federal, state and local agencies, develop a list of entities in need of funding assistance using existing systems such as Capital Improvement Plan inventories and other available resources
- Assist disadvantaged communities to gain access to funding
- Provide TA to states and/or municipalities to encourage community outreach and engagement
- Identify affordable financing and long-term operations and maintenance (O&M) strategies
- Provide TA for responsible asset management including creating Asset Inventories, Asset Management Plans, and Capital Improvement/Replacement Plans
- Use GIS technology as appropriate to support inventorying systems assets and facilitate asset management planning
- Through TA and research, develop the operational sustainability of utilities by helping them establish adequate user rates to support the full cost of services, O&M costs, reserve funds and debt service
- Provide TA to calculate the long-term financial impact on rate payers of funding new capital projects
- Support pre-application development – scope of work, procurement
- Assist with the coordination of funder and application requirements
- Assist communities throughout the professional services contract negotiation and contract agreement process
- Provide project management and project implementation services to advance projects to construction
- Research ways to lower costs of environmental protection
- Provide TA to states and Tribes to expand their capacity to administer and disburse funding, including BIL funding
- Support regional efforts to increase economies of scale and funding competitiveness

- Create and maintain an R9 EFC resource website

Table 1. Providers, Action/Methods, Timeline

Provider		Action/Method	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
1.	RCAC	Project kick-off and implementation	X				
2.	RCAC	Prepare and distribute quarterly/semiannual reports as determined by EPA Project Officer	X	X	X	X	X
3.	RCAC/MM	Develop and update Disadvantaged Community Identification Tool	X	X	X	X	X
4.	RCAC	Create and maintain EFC website	X	X	X	X	X
5.	RCAC/MM	Plan, prepare, coordinate and deliver presentations/trainings at state infrastructure funding fairs and other events	X	X	X	X	X
6.	RCAC/MM	Provide on-site and virtual TA to assist DACs to apply for BIL funds	X	X	X	X	X
7.	RCAC/MM	Deliver one-on-one training in-person and via webinars and web-based learning modules	X	X	X	X	X
8.	RCAC/RCAP	Conduct environmental finance-related research and demonstration projects		X	X	X	X
9.	RCAC/RCAP	Coordinate with local, regional, federal and state primacy agencies, SRF state agencies, R9 Tribal team, and IHS	X	X	X	X	X

Table 2. Associated Work Products

Action/Method		Work Products	Proposed Quantity Year 1	Annual: Years 2-5
1 Program Coordination				
1.1	Project implementation	Executed cooperative agreement with EPA; subcontract with MM	2 executed contracts	2 executed contracts
		Allocate resources; develop work plans; hire additional staff/schedule existing staff; finalize executable detailed work plan.	Fully mobilized program	Work plan updated annually
1.2	Reports to EPA	Provide reports per EPA specifications.	2-4 reports	2-4 reports
1.3	Stakeholder coordination	Convene a task force made up of State primacy agencies, SRF agencies, R9 Tribal team, and others.	At least 4 meetings with R9 annually. At least 1 meeting annually with other stakeholders	At least 4 meetings with R9 annually. At least 1 meeting annually with other stakeholders

2 Tools and Outreach				
2.1	Develop Disadvantaged Community Identification Tool	Create GIS map with various layers of economic, social, and environmental inequality indicators. Develop a priority list of communities to be approached for TA and training by using the DCI tool.	Map developed	Map updated and refined as additional information becomes available
	Other environmental finance tools	Review/refine/integrate existing tools, including EFC's financial dashboards and Climate Resilience Evaluation and Awareness tool (CREAT). Create tools to fill identified gaps.		
2.2	Maintain EFC Website	R website repository for links to tools, calendar, resources	Website will be created and updated as needed	New material posted on website; website maintained
2.3	State infrastructure funding fairs and Tribal annual meetings	<p>Coordinate with funding agencies and provide training. Training/presentation topics may include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BIL funding opportunities • Project financing strategies • Asset management • User rate setting • Regionalization strategies and approaches • Capital project planning • GIS support for infrastructure decision making • Grant administration • Project management • Using census data • Procuring professional services • Reports/case studies on EFC research 	1 training/presentation at up to 3 state fairs in 2 territories	1 trainings/presentations at up to 3 state fairs in 2 territories
3 Direct TA				
3.1	Direct technical assistance	<p>TA topics may include but are not limited to::</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolutions for funding • Completing funding applications • Meeting funding requirements • Developing asset managements • Developing rates to support O&M expenses • Work with the utilities to set up reserve set asides • Assist decision makers to negotiate contracts • Assist decision makers through the procurement process • Development of scope of project scope 	TA for 20 BIL funding applications for AZ, CA, HI, NV and the Pacific territories	TA for 25 BIL funding applications for AZ, CA, HI, NV and the Pacific territories

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing Capital Improvement Plans • O&M plans • Project management • Contract management • Financial statements • Affordability studies 		
		Responsive TA to regulated utilities. On-site and remote support. TA topics above.	10 TA projects	10 TA projects
4 Training				
4.1	Training	In-person	8 total 2 Tribal focus	8 total 2 Tribal focus
		Webinars Web-based learning modules	6 total 1 Tribal topic	6 total 1 intended for Tribal communities
		Topics may include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding process • Hands-on funding applications • Budgets and financial statements • Project financing strategies • Asset management plans • Reserve Set Asides • GIS asset mapping • User rate setting • Grant management • Project management/project implementation • Procuring professional services • Labor Compliance • Funding requirements • Construction management • Training on EFC tools 		

1. Program Coordination

1.1. Program Implementation: On notice of award, RCAC will work with the National EPA and RCAP on the cooperative agreements. RCAC will create a Year One work plan and hire and train staff where needed. In subsequent years, work plans will be developed and updated to reflect lessons learned from previous years, trends and changes identified.

1.2. Reports to EPA: RCAC will collect all required data and provide reports as specified by EPA. RCAC has a dedicated Grants and Contracts Administration (GCA) unit with staff assigned to specific departments and contracts. The GCA staff assigned to this contract will work with the EFC Manager and project partners to collect, analyze and create reports that meet all standard reporting requirements. Specialized and technical reports will be created by RCAC's RWI EFC Manager and staff.

1.3. Stakeholder Coordination: RCAC will convene a taskforce team made up of state primacy and funder agencies, council of governments and other organizations who will help prioritize infrastructure projects for funding. RCAC will establish a task force team for each state, convene and facilitate calls and keep all stakeholders informed of priority lists, status of projects, project funding gaps, etc.

2. Tools and Outreach

2.1 Develop Disadvantaged Community Identification Tool and Outreach and other environmental finance tools: Using the Disadvantaged Community ID Tool, develop a list of communities and in consultation with EPA, IHS and State water and wastewater regulatory agencies prioritize the list to begin Circuit Rider-style outreach to communities. Communities will be contacted, in person whenever possible, or by email or phone, to make them aware of funding opportunities. RCAC will complete Technical, Managerial and Financial Capacity assessments to determine current capacity, and recommend capacity building TA and training to improve the chances of receiving BIL funding for capital projects. Each community will be contacted multiple times to establish trust and a strong working relationship. Emphasis and attention will be given to systems that have never received federal funding or technical assistance.

2.2. Maintain Region 9 RWI EFC Website: The continuously updated website will provide links to tools, resources, training, and a calendar of events.

2.3. State Infrastructure Funding Fairs and Tribal annual meetings: In collaboration with EPA R9 and the different state SRF programs, RCAC will promote funding through established platforms, events, and venues. Events like fairs will bring together funders and utilities in need of infrastructure funding. In-person events will provide the opportunity for information collection and sharing, tool dissemination, and for utilities to have their questions answered, See Table 2 for training topics.

3. Direct Technical Assistance

3.1. Direct TA: In collaboration with EPA R9 and state and territories primacy agencies, RCAC will identify rural and Tribal communities to receive direct on-site technical assistance. RCAC staff will provide TA to address specific utility needs and build their capacity to become competitive for funding. Core support will be on-site, supplemented with remote (telephone/email) support as needed. TA will also include the consolidation/regionalization of projects and/or feasibility studies, including all components of infrastructure, staffing, management, and financing. Additional TA will assist with grant/loan application preparation, the procurement process, scope of work development, selection of services, and a full range of technical, managerial, financial topics on water and wastewater utilities specific to the entity's needs. RCAC will provide both in-person and virtual capacity building TA to increase disadvantaged communities' ability to apply for BIL funds. See Table 2 for additional topics.

4. Training

4.1. Training: RCAC will offer a robust training series across R9 states and territories. RCAC's TA providers and content experts will conduct classroom-type trainings when appropriate for

remotely located communities with limited broadband access and virtual training opportunities will be offered for broader audiences where broadband is available. Web-based learning modules will also be available for communities unable to attend virtual or in-person training events. In-person training will be offered at easily accessible sites and strategically located to provide access to remote communities across R9 states and territories.

ii. Project Partnerships:

Rural Community Assistance Corporation

Role

RCAC will lead and coordinate all R9 RWI EFC activities with EPA, the SRFs and other stakeholders.

Responsibilities

- Collect data from partners
- Create comprehensive, timely reports
- With RCAP, ensure active involvement and attendance at all major meetings
- Coordinate and contribute to GIS tools development
- Host the R9 EFC website
- Lead development, coordination, and provision of trainings for State infrastructure funding events
- Lead development, coordination, and provision of all in-person and virtual trainings
- Lead coordination with EPA and primacy agencies
- Provide direct technical assistance and lead all TA projects
- Provide direct and virtual TA to communities to build their capacity to submit funding applications and manage funds received

Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP)

RCAC is the western partner for RCAP, a national network of nonprofits working to provide technical assistance, training, resources, and support to rural communities across every state, the U.S. territories, and Tribal lands. RCAP's mission is to ensure everyone has access to safe drinking water and sanitary wastewater.

Role

RCAP will assist the R9 RWI EFC to identify community needs and build local technical, managerial and financial capacity to meet those needs.

Responsibilities

- Assist RCAC to implement water and wastewater technical assistance programs
- Assist RCAC to provide community specific TA and training to small water and wastewater systems

Publish articles based on EFC work in RCAP's national publications *Rural Matters* and *Drop of Knowledge*.

Moonshot Missions (MM)

MM, based in Bethesda, MD, serves as a peer advisor to the water sector to ensure the delivery of clean water and to protect the environment and public health in an affordable way. MM works with communities to identify and customize suitable projects within a roadmap that increases cash flow while solving significant environmental and public health challenges.

Role

MM will assist the R9 RWI EFC to identify community needs and build local technical, managerial and financial capacity to meet those needs.

Responsibilities

- Assist RCAC to enable communities to gain access to federal and state funding under the BIL by providing planning, permitting, design review and application assistance.
- Assist RCAC to identify capital improvement projects and operational efficiency improvements that can be undertaken to help utilities adopt best practices, achieve improved environmental and public health results, and lower costs.

As the lead applicant, RCAC estimates it will provide a subaward in the amount of \$50,000 per year to MM during each year of the five-year project.

iii. Technical Assistance, Research, Training, and Financial and Environmental Results and Measuring Progress

a. Stated Strategic Goal and Objective/Link to EPA Strategic Plan

The Objective of the proposed project is to operate a collaborative, responsive, and innovative Regional Water Infrastructure EFC in EPA Region 9. The activities to be funded under the Environmental Finance Center Grant Program will support the following Strategic Goals and Objectives of EPA's FY 2022-2026 Strategic Plan:

- Goal 1: Tackle the Climate Crisis:
 - Objective 1.2: Accelerate Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change Impacts

R9 RWI EFC activities will assist in tackling the climate crisis through programs that identify and access financing for energy efficient infrastructure projects and support technical, managerial, and financial improvements in water and wastewater utilities. Utility operations and asset management strategies will include maximizing energy efficiency design and operational efficiency. The R9 EFC's focus on regionalization can result in the replacement of multiple aging, inefficient infrastructure facilities with a combined updated high efficiency utility.
- Goal 2: Take Decisive Action to Advance Environmental Justice and Civil Rights:
 - Objective 2.1: Promote Environmental Justice and Civil Rights at the Federal, Tribal, State and Local Levels

Most of the communities the RCAC/R9 RWI EFC will assist are either economically disadvantaged or severely disadvantaged, and many have significant minority populations, including Hawaiian, Pacific Island, Tribal members, Colonia and farmworker communities, that lack the resources to address problematic environmental issues. RCAC advocates on environmental justice issues on behalf of disadvantaged, rural communities in its 13-state western footprint at the federal, state, Tribal, and local levels. For example, in 2018, RCAC sponsored AB 2060, which expanded existing law to allow advance payments from the California State Water Resources Control Board to allow Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) to access funding programs for design and construction costs for water and wastewater projects. RCAC also assisted Region 10 to conduct workshops in Alaska in the Central Alaskan Yup'ik language, and currently provides translation services to help linguistically isolated communities access EPA resources.

- Goal 3: Enforce Environmental Laws and Ensure Compliance:
 - Objective 3.2: Detect Violations and Promote Compliance

The primary objective of RCAC's Environmental department is to ensure that rural communities comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act. With our RCAP partners, we have developed many trainings and tools that support this objective. In addition, we provide one-on-one compliance focused technical assistance to small and rural communities and Tribal utilities. Tools will be developed and promoted to make permit and regulation compliance easier and more reliable. Also, digital record-keeping tools, including GIS data, will facilitate electronic reporting and public transparency.

- Goal 5: Ensure Clean and Safe Water for All Communities:
 - Objective 5.1: Ensure Safe Drinking Water and Reliable Water Infrastructure

As stated above, RCAC's Environmental department's primary objective is to support communities to comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Clean Water Act. In conjunction with water system personnel, R9 RWI EFC staff will conduct a thorough evaluation of all the technical components that make up the system, including sources, pumping, treatment, storage, distribution, water quality and quantity, energy usage, water pumped vs. water sold, system security and level of vulnerability, rates and fees, reserves, policies and procedures, rules and regulations, and any other areas as needed. The EFC will also provide training that will assist rural water and wastewater system operators to prepare capital improvement and asset management plans to ensure reliable infrastructure.

- Goal 6: Safeguard and Revitalize Communities:
 - Objective 6.2: Reduce Waste and Prevent Environmental Contamination
 - Prepare for and Respond to Environmental Emergencies

R9 RWI EFC activities will promote sustainable and livable communities by developing resources and providing direct technical assistance to regionalize/consolidate operations. Achieving economies of scale is a key ingredient to sustainable utilities. The R9 RWI EFC will also provide infrastructure financing information, and tools and technical assistance on how to create financially sustainable infrastructure. R9 RWI EFC programs will improve emergency preparedness in water and wastewater utilities, and will address waste generation and management with solid/hazardous waste programs, including recycling and composting. The R9 RWI EFC programs will have a particular focus on strengthening human health and environmental protection across R9 communities. Equitable distribution of environmental benefits will be promoted by the R9 RWI EFC's focus on Tribal, farmworker, Colonias, Hawaiian, and Pacific Island communities.

- Goal 7: Ensure Safety of Chemicals for People and the Environment:
 - Objective 7.1: Ensure Chemical and Pesticide Safety
 - Objective 7.2: Promote Pollution Prevention

Modern, properly built and maintained water and wastewater systems prevent pollution. The R9 RWI EFC's programs will be designed to achieve the highest level of utility management and operations and help utilities obtain financing to repair, improve, or update infrastructure. Chemical safety is addressed in the materials RCAC uses to train water and wastewater utility operators and in solid waste plant best practices and protocols for hazardous waste. Chemical control and safety is a key concern in the development of any new infrastructure.

b. Results of Activities (Outputs)

The anticipated results of this project's activities include the following:

- Small, rural, and/or disadvantaged communities in EPA Region 9 will have increased capacity to apply for, and access, State Revolving Fund (SRF) funding through BIL. With the R9 RWI EFC's technical assistance, communities will submit SRF funding applications for capital projects.
- Based on the R9 RWI EFC's work plan, an established number of communities will receive training that results in knowledge of available infrastructure funding and financing resources.
- Determined by the R9 RWI EFC's work plan, primacy and Tribal agencies will receive income surveys and/or technical assistance to identify and pursue tools, resources and other opportunities that support SRF programs to build their TA offerings for disadvantaged communities.
- The R9 RWI EFC will develop and implement training courses, information exchanges, and forums that focus on the development of financial capacity.
- The R9 RWI EFC will develop electronic models and software tools focused on financing environmental protection.

- The R9 RWI EFC will develop case studies and lessons-learned materials related to asset management, financial planning, and effective communication of needs for infrastructure investments and environmental projects (particularly for rural, small, disadvantaged communities). Articles based on case studies will be published in RCAP publications *Rural Matters* and *Drop of Knowledge*.
- The R9 RWI EFC will develop tools and resources to support identification of communities that need assistance, and to track the status of implemented solutions.

RCAC will monitor the accomplishment of expected Outputs by tracking achievement of deliverables, collecting data, monitoring due dates, and assisting project staff with report preparation. Monthly team room meetings will be held to assess project status.

The R9 RWI EFC will use an RCAC-designed TMF assessment tool for pre- and post-assessment of all TA projects. The tool provides a score and the status of more than 50 capacity components, rating them acceptable, in-progress/not complete, deficient, or critical concern. This assessment tool helps prioritize, guide, and formulate specific TA needs for each community, and is currently used to report on all EPA grants.

c. Projected Financial and Environmental Improvement (Outcomes)

The financial or environmental improvements that will be accomplished as a result of project activities will include:

- An increase in the number of communities (especially small, rural, Tribal, underserved, and/or disadvantaged communities) that successfully apply for and access financing and funding for infrastructure projects
- An increase in the number of communities (especially small, rural, Tribal, underserved, and/or disadvantaged communities) that understand how to access financing and funding for infrastructure projects
- An increase in the number of local, state, and Tribal governments, and non-governmental organizations that have the financial, technical, and institutional resources and capabilities to pay for environmental protection and operate in compliance with environmental requirements

RCAC's GCA department will monitor accomplishment of expected Outcomes by tracking achievement of deliverables, collecting data, monitoring due dates, and assisting project staff with report preparation. Monthly team room meetings will be held to assess project status.

The EFC will use an RCAC-designed TMF assessment tool for pre- and post-assessment of all TA projects. The tool provides a score and the status of more than 50 capacity components, rating them acceptable, in-progress/not complete, deficient, or critical concern. This tool is currently used to report on all EPA grants.

iv. Detailed Budget Narrative:

RCAC has been awarded federal grants and contracts for the past 44 years. Our Grants and Contracts Administration (GCA) department ensures contract deliverables, budget compliance, and timely and efficient grant funds expenditure. GCA currently administers more than 200 public and non-public grants and contracts. As with all projects funded by a specific grant, GCA will measure progress toward the achievement of goals in partnership with program managers and staff and will create timely reports.

The budget is designed to accomplish the proposed project's goals, objectives, and measurable environmental outcomes. It provides the following approximate percentages of the total requested award for each major activity:

Program Coordination: 14 percent
Tools and Outreach: 4.5 percent
Training: 12.5 percent
Direct Technical Assistance: 69 percent

Personnel: This category includes RCAC Environmental and support staff members.

Fringe benefits: RCAC's fringe benefits include FICA and Medicare, worker's compensation, health, vision, life, disability and dental insurance, retirement, holidays, and paid time off. The fringe benefit expense is prorated based on current rate of 46.9 percent of salary.

Travel: This category includes mileage, car rental, and per diem (lodging and meals). All travel costs will meet the federal per diem guidelines and require supervisor approval.

Supplies – The supply category includes grant specific and consumable supplies. Consumable supplies are general supplies with an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or less such as paper, printer cartridges, copier toner, software licenses and computer disks.

Other:

Postage - \$13,100 over five years
Printing - \$34,400 over five years
Training Costs - \$34,756 over five years
Subgrant to Moonshot Missions – \$250,000 (\$50,000 per year for five years)

Indirect charges: Indirect costs are those expenditures which benefit all programs undertaken by RCAC as a corporation and which cannot be directly charged to a specific funding source or program. These costs are allocated across all funding sources based on a negotiated indirect cost rate. RCAC's federally approved indirect cost rate from 10/1/2021 through 9/30/2024 is 32 percent. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is RCAC's cognizant agency.

v. **Milestone Schedule:**

Year 1 Milestone: Agency Coordination				
Tasks	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1.1: Meet with Region 10 EPA staff to coordinate EFC program work	X		X	
1.2: Meet with State Primacy and SRF agencies and IHS to gather pertinent information on community needs and provide updates	X		X	
1.3: With RCAP, attend semi-annuals EFCN meetings and coordinate with National EPA.	X		X	
Year 1 Milestone: Create Disadvantaged Community Identification Tool				
Tasks	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1.4: Begin research on available GIS format social, economic and environmental risk indicators	X	X	X	
1.5: Meet with State Primacy and SRF agencies and IHS to gather pertinent information on risk indicators	X	X	X	
1.6: Begin to build GIS tool		X	X	X
Year 1 Milestone: Strategic systematic outreach to priority systems				
Tasks	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1.7: Develop list of priority communities to begin outreach to		X	X	X
1. Begin contacting selected communities		X	X	X
1. Provide educational materials and training around BIL funding opportunities		X	X	X
1.8: Conduct TMF capacity assessments of select communities		X	X	X
1.9: Develop individual community workplans to guide future TA and training		X	X	X
Year 1 Milestone: Begin individual community TA and training				
Tasks	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1.10: Pre-application capacity building and education		X	X	X
1.11: Asset management plan and user rate studies		X	X	X
1.12: Project funding strategy assistance		X	X	X
1.13: Pre-development and design engineering firm selection TA		X	X	X
1.14: Funding application assistance		X	X	X
1.15: Community income surveys		X	X	X
Year 1 Milestone: Environmental financing tools				
Tasks	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1.16: Begin review of existing tools	X	X	X	X
1.17: Begin research and development of new tools		X	X	X

Year 1 Milestone: Case studies and lessons learned				
Tasks	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
1.18: Develop case studies of project successes, challenges and lessons learned				X
1.19: Share case studies with R10 EPA, State SRF and primacy agencies, and partners				X
Year 2 Milestone: Post funding award TA and training				
Tasks	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2.1: Project management TA and training	X	X	X	X
2.2: Post funding award user rate analysis	X	X	X	X
2.3: Construction firm selection TA	X	X	X	X
2.4: Davis Bacon, Buy American, Build American compliance TA	X	X	X	X
Year 2-5 Milestones: Continuation of work started in Years 1 & 2				
Tasks	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
2.5: Agency Coordination	X		X	
2.6: Refinement of DCI and CDW template tools	X	X	X	X
2.7: Outreach to priority systems	X	X	X	X
2.8: Community TA and Training	X	X	X	X
2.9: Review and refinement of environmental tools	X	X	X	X
2.10: Case studies				X
2.11: Articles in RCAP's <i>Rural Matters</i> and <i>Drop of Knowledge</i>	X		X	

vi. **Programmatic Capability/Experience:**

a. Organizational Experience

RCAC assists rural communities throughout the West to build, improve, manage, operate, or finance drinking water and wastewater systems. RCAC has helped small, rural communities and Tribes to access millions of dollars in grants and loans, and trained thousands of individuals through customized technical assistance and workshops. RCAC's experienced instructors provide a broad range of trainings across a 13-state footprint to small municipal and nonprofit water and wastewater systems personnel.

For almost 44 years, RCAC has worked with rural communities in the western U.S., providing training and technical assistance to improve the quality of environmental utility service and ensure regulatory compliance. RCAC works under Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) contracts in Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, New Mexico and Washington to help small systems with technical, managerial and financial capacity building. These SRF funds support RCAC's programs to educate and train small water system operators, managers and boards. Additionally, RCAC provides services to small, rural utilities under grants and contracts with the EPA, Health and Human Services (HHS), Department of Agriculture (USDA) Indian Health Services (IHS), and other public and private funding sources.

RCAC is the western affiliate of the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP), a national network of six environmental technical assistance providers serving small rural communities. RCAC assists more than 500 communities each year to improve environmental and community health by developing sustainable water and waste disposal facilities, and increasing the capacity of system operators. Most of the communities we assist are economically disadvantaged and have populations under 2,500 and many have significant minority populations. RCAC places particular emphasis on providing culturally appropriate programs and services for Tribes and Hispanic farmworker and Colonias populations.

RCAC has operated and managed a Tribal Circuit Rider program for EPA Region 9 for nearly 30 years, and for Region 10 for the past seven years. RCAC's staff members have extensive technical knowledge and demonstrated expertise in all aspects of Tribal drinking water and wastewater systems operations, maintenance and management. In addition to this work in R10, RCAC has provided on-site technical assistance to Native organizations in all of the Region 10 states. RCAC established the Native American Water Masters Association (NAWMA) program in conjunction with its work with EPA R10. These quarterly peer-to-peer meetings provide a forum to discuss drinking water regulations, technologies, management and issues facing Tribal water utilities. NAWMA training meetings support drinking water certification and are recognized by the states for continuing education/professional development contact hours. These meetings will be an excellent forum for the presentation of training developed by the EFC staff and discussion of new tools.

In California, RCAC works under the Safe and Affordable Funding for Equity and Resilience (SAFER) Program and Proposition 1 to provide disadvantaged communities with safe and affordable drinking water. RCAC delivers TA and training so DACs can demonstrate that they have adequate technical, managerial, and financial capacity to operate and maintain treatment systems in order to be eligible for funding.

Throughout its history, RCAC has emphasized environmental justice in its work with disadvantaged, minority population, rural communities. As a participant on the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council, RCAC helps to provide advice and recommendations to the EPA on a broad range of issues related to environmental justice.

RCAC created its Loan Fund in 1988 and was certified as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) in 1996. The Loan Fund was established in response to the unmet need in rural communities to finance community projects and RCAC is one of few CDFIs that provide access to capital for rural environmental infrastructure. Financing is available through the RCAC Loan Fund's low-interest loans that fill financing gaps and serve a client population that has been historically neglected by conventional markets. Two programs – the Environmental Recoverable Interest Fund and the Water Funders exchange – provide pre-development financing through zero percent short-term loans.

RCAC's Grants and Contracts Administration (GCA) team works with field staff and managers to ensure that deliverables are achieved and reports are completed in a timely manner. The team holds monthly "team rooms" with all Contract Managers to document progress, discuss and find solutions to obstacles, and review budgets, timelines and deliverables. GCA coordinates with

department directors and managers to gather all information needed to create and submit all required progress and final funding reports.

b. Staff Expertise/Qualifications

Full resumes for all proposed R10 RWI EFC staff are attached. The following RCAC key personnel will lead the team:

Ari Neumann, Director, Community & Environmental Services

Ari Neumann became RCAC's Director of Community and Environmental Services in November of 2018 after serving as Assistant Director since 2016. He oversees more than 80 employees providing drinking water, wastewater, solid waste, and economic development assistance to rural and tribal communities in 13 western states. Mr. Neumann also manages a portfolio of technical assistance and training grants. In addition to supervising program work, Mr. Neumann directs RCAC's government affairs efforts.

Olga Morales, Assistant Director, Community & Environmental Services

Olga Morales joined RCAC in 2004. She oversees the implementation of multiple programs including RCAC's Regionalization Program, the Colonias Program along the U.S-Mexico border, and the Health & Human Services Grant - Rural Community Development Program among others. Ms. Morales is the co-author and translator of RCAC's Leadership Program curriculum, designed for emerging community leaders in rural and Tribal communities. She is nationally recognized for facilitating partnership efforts and processes to create sustainable regional entities among small utilities. Ms. Morales has proposed and passed legislation to create regional utility structures in the state of New Mexico, allowing small water systems to merge their assets and liabilities to create long-term sustainability. She has also, through legislation, created a permanent infrastructure project fund for entities federally designated as Colonias. Ms. Morales served as co-chair of the EPA Climate Ready Water Utilities Work Group and was appointed as chair of the National Drinking Water Advisory Council (NDWAC) in 2011.

Pablo Figueroa, Regional Contract Manager

Pablo Figueroa joined RCAC in 2013. With extensive experience in water and wastewater treatment operations and maintenance, he manages an environmental contract portfolio totaling over \$9 million annually for RCAC. Mr. Figueroa also provides technical assistance and conducts operator certification workshops focusing on operator math, and he previously served as an RCAC Tribal Circuit Rider providing technical assistance and training to Tribal water system operators and utility administrators.

vii. Past Performance

RCAC has received federal and state grants for almost 44 years, and has demonstrated the ability to successfully manage multiple contracts, pass-through agreements, and multi-year budgeting associated with the most complicated of federal contracts. RCAC's Grants and Contracts Administration department administers and fulfills contract reporting requirements.

RCAC receives referrals from a state's Division of Drinking Water, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Regions, or Indian Health Service (IHS) for community drinking water systems that are out of compliance or in need of financial or managerial assistance. Following the referral, RCAC reaches out to the community to see if assistance is wanted. Once the community agrees to receive assistance, RCAC staff conduct a TMF assessment. This assessment is designed to ascertain root causes of the issues and identify other issues that could negatively impact long-term sustainability. Once these have been identified, RCAC and the community develop a scope of work and establish a timetable to ensure the project is completed on time and meets the community's goals.

Before beginning a project, RCAC identifies key stakeholders and consults with them to understand their goals and expectations. RCAC provides them with a review of the problem and how best to address it. This initial meeting not only provides a project overview, but also outlines timeframe constraints, and necessary milestones. Preferred communication methods between RCAC and the community are established and regular check-ins are scheduled. Communication methods can include telephone calls, email and in-person meetings.

RCAC uses a community work plan document that serves as guide for the scope of the project and lists key contacts, project objectives and scheduled meetings. Projects with competing interests, changing leadership or predominantly remote interactions can sometimes lose momentum. When this occurs, RCAC staff provides additional increased communication through site visits, phone calls or virtual meetings, and may recraft tasks into smaller, more easily achieved components, which can help to move a project forward.

RCAC has a demonstrated, effective process to manage all contract requirements, including quality control and effective oversight from initial work plan development to timely drawn-down and contract close-out. RCAC's Grants and Contracts Administration (GCA) department ensures contract deliverables, budget compliance and reporting in a timely manner.

RCAC tracks completion of deliverables and provides project close-out reports. Reports are submitted as required by the contracting agency's schedule, and include work completed, work to be completed, and issues encountered. The majority of our projects are completed within the performance period of the grants under which we are providing technical assistance. In some cases, projects are rolled over across funding cycles. To measure customer satisfaction, RCAC sends out surveys via e-mail or mail on completion of every project.

Assistance Agreements Performed Within the Last Three Years

Contracting Agency	Environmental Protection Agency
Contract Title	EPA Environmental Finance Center
Contract Type	Cost Reimbursement
Description of contract	EFC to provide multimedia environmental finance expertise and outreach to help communities in Region 9 meet environmental requirements.
Period of Performance	1/1/2016 – 8/30/2022
Reporting History	Quarterly reports submitted on time.
Contracting Agency	California State Water Resources Control Board
Contract Title	SAFER
Contract Type	Cost Reimbursement
Description of contract	Circuit Rider and TA program
Period of Performance	3/9/2020 – 3/31/2024
Reporting History	Semi-annual reports and final report at the end of a 4-year funding cycle. To date, all reports submitted on time.
Contracting Agency	Water Infrastructure Finance Authority of Arizona
Contract Title	Drinking Water State Revolving Fund
Contract Type	Time and Materials
Description of contract	Capacity Development/Technical Assistance to Small Public Drinking Water Systems
Period of Performance	11/1/2019 – 12/31/2022
Reporting History	No reports required
Contracting Agency	Rural Community Assistance Partnership
Contract Title	EPA 1 G
Contract Type	Cost Reimbursement
Description of contract	Training/TA to improve Water Quality & enable small PWSs to maintain compliance w/SDWA
Period of Performance	10/01/2021 – 03/31/2023
Reporting History	Semi-annual reports and final report at the end of a 5-year funding cycle. To date, all reports submitted on time.

viii. Attached Additional Materials

a. Resumes

b. Support Letters